

## North Scott Junior High School Follow-up Case Study

*[Full scale site visits were conducted at North Scott during the spring of 2004 and 2005. The 2006 follow-up was a phone interview conducted with the principal of North Scott, Dave Griffin.]*

In the spring of 2004, we first visited North Scott Junior High School (NSJHS) to study their implementation of the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM). Following that first visit, we noted that the school was strong on the operating principles (focus on curriculum and instruction, etc.), in analyzing student data and providing time for learning opportunities and teacher collaboration. We also observed that the school had additional work to do in the areas of planning and monitoring an implementation, collecting formative data, and incorporating joint planning of lessons into team meetings.

### Content

We again visited the school in the spring of 2005 to learn of any changes in their professional development program and to observe progress in areas identified during the previous visit. North Scott Junior High had indeed made some significant changes in their PD content. During the 2004-05 academic year, the school improved its SSR program and added Six Thinking Strategies (*Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis.) They had strengthened their training design, increasing the number of demonstrations and classroom models of the strategies to be implemented. The focus remained on reading and teachers were still expected to use the Think Aloud and Graphic Organizer strategies they had studied during the previous year, but a greater emphasis was being placed on content area use of reading strategies.

In the spring of 2006 we found that North Scott has continued its learning and consolidation of the six thinking strategies, with intensive training throughout the year. In addition, the literacy coaches are identifying good examples of the six strategies and taping teachers with their classrooms. One of the coaches then edits the tapes, which are shared with the entire staff. While teachers were initially hesitant to share taped examples of their teaching, most are now enthusiastic about the process and feel they gain greater understanding of the strategies by seeing their peers use them.

At our first visit, the SSR program at North Scott was typical – students read whatever material they chose for 20 minutes per day and there was no accountability for what they had read. Consequently, many students browsed magazines or newspapers during SSR. During the second visit, we found that the faculty had read The SSR Handbook by Janice L. Pilgreen and had tightened their implementation of SSR to include the eight factors of a successful silent sustained reading program. In this third year of the IPDM, the school has maintained the modifications introduced last year and has introduced the practice of Pair/Share on Fridays. The reading specialist designed generic questions for the staff for the entire year and even placed them on overhead transparencies. As a result, many more students are reading books during SSR and actually look forward to sharing their reading with peers.

### Teacher Collaboration

During our first visit we noted that the collaborative teams worked collegially together and were focused on the learning needs of their students. We were concerned, however, that collaborative energy was not being harnessed in the planning and development of lessons. In the 04-05 school

year, there was progress in this area, but it was quite uneven. Because collaborative planning was made as a recommendation, teams treated it as discretionary and some teams (as well as some individuals) engaged in collaborative planning while others did not.

During the current school year (05-06), an excellent structure designed by the Building Leadership Team has resulted in extensive collaborative planning. Because each of the literacy coaches has chosen to specialize in a content area, those coaches have worked with subject area departments to develop lessons specific to each subject, demonstrate them in classrooms, and facilitate group planning and development. This type of collaborative work closely resembles Judith Warren Little's description of "joint work", which she considered the highest level of professional interaction.

### **Implementation Plan and the Study of Implementation**

In the spring of 2004, teachers were actively learning and attempting to use the content of their PD program (Read Aloud and Graphic Organizers). There was no implementation plan and actual use of the strategies was not being documented with consistency. We commented on the issue of implementation during our first visit.

During our second visit, teachers were working hard to add the six thinking strategies to their classroom instruction. Some teams were keeping records of their use of various strategies while others were not, so the implementation data available to the BLT were incomplete. We noted the improvement and suggested the BLT might formalize its expectations and data collection with respect to implementation.

In 2005-06, the BLT has done an excellent job both of setting expectations for implementation and collecting data. Teachers complete logs for two-week blocks (logs are filled out daily and turned in weekly for two weeks, then off for two weeks). On the logs, teachers name the strategies used, what they were used for, and their evaluation of the lessons. The BLT collects the logs, summarizes them and maintains a cumulative chart to provide feedback to the faculty on their implementation of each strategy. According to the principal, "It's doing exactly what we wanted it to – it tells us teachers understand the strategies, use them and are feeling successful with them."

### **Formative Data**

Collecting formative data on reading comprehension has been a struggle for North Scott, as it has been for most secondary schools. During our first visit, teachers were designing quizzes, or probes, on specific passages, but the consensus was that the data were unreliable. Teachers continued their informal assessments through the second year as they searched for a better alternative. During the third year of their IPDM implementation, the school has adopted *Following the Leader*, an on-line program that enables teachers to create comprehension tests from an item bank (homeroom.com). Students in the reading guidance program are assessed with three online tests given throughout the year. In addition, all students in the reading guidance program and the at-risk program are being assessed with a pre and post SRI. The principal believes they are now getting more reliable interim data on reading comprehension.

North Scott also has arranged with an AEA consultant to collect data on student use of the strategies that have been the content of PD for the past couple of years. The consultant will interview focus groups of high, middle and low ability students to determine if they know the strategies and use them independently.

## Summative Data

North Scott has maintained a high percentage of students at the proficient level on the ITBS reading comprehension test and has shown steady improvement. Their most impressive gains have been with low SES students and students with IEPs (see chart below).

**Percent of Students Proficient on the  
ITBS Reading Comprehension Test**

	<b>2003-2004</b>		<b>2004-2005</b>		<b>2005-2006</b>	
	<b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> grade</b>
All	72	77.6	79	77	80	79.5
Low SES	53	50	69	58	69	67.5
IEP	11	19.2	17	38.7	44	25

We end each interview by inviting the interviewee to add additional comments or observations. Dave Griffin provided the following:

We decided that BLT this year should really follow the IPDM. We got [AEA consultant] to help us stick to that model – she comes every other week to our meetings and helps us stay on track . This is the first year we’ve really gotten it, the first time we’ve measured the effects of our efforts. We haven’t added anything new– finally we have some things that can stay in place, like SSR and thinking strategies – and can move to maintenance next year as we move our focus to writing.